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President: Mr. Nesho (Vice-President) ..... (Albania)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Nesho (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Dialogue with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions on the theme: Achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: a regional perspective

Introduction by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe and Coordinator of the regional commissions of the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2005/15-20)

1. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe, and Coordinator of the regional commissions) said that holding the dialogue with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions directly after the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council was a positive step in reviewing the regional dimension of global issues and a more coherent approach to addressing the divergences in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals at the regional and subregional levels. The nexus between poverty reduction, employment and social integration could not be understated, and she hoped that some of the issues raised in the discussion would also be considered under the coordination and operational segments.

2. The global conferences of the 1990s and the more recent Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development contained clear mandates for regional implementation and follow-up, a clear recognition of the role of the regional commissions in advocacy, norm-setting, information sharing and exchange of best practices. They worked closely with the functional commissions to review and assess performance and to identify common challenges for various regions, in order to make appropriate policy recommendations.

3. The regional assessments of the Goals revealed at best a mixed picture, with significant shortfalls and sharp contrasts in achievement. Generalizations of global and regional trends failed to reflect the vast differences across and within regions, subregions and at times even within countries. The challenges facing developing countries were enormous: absolute poverty had continued to grow in sub-Saharan Africa, and half of the countries in her own region were expected to miss at least one of the Goals. Solutions would have to be based on coherent policies at all levels, adequate external financing for development, fair trade arrangements and good governance.

4. With globalization and growing economic interdependence, regional cooperation offered an effective vehicle for addressing common development challenges. While country ownership of the Goals was key, regional approaches and South-South cooperation could reinforce good practices at the country level and promote them on a wider scale. Partnership between developed and developing countries was also crucial.

5. **Mr. Kim Hak-Su** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), on the subject of the achievement of the Goals at the regional level, highlighted the linkages between the national and cross-border dimensions of implementation. The regional reports were intended to complement, not duplicate, the national reports on implementation of the Goals and to help to identify regional characteristics and best practices. They could provide policy recommendations to strengthen implementation through regional and international cooperation. For example, ESCAP cooperated with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR).

6. In order to avoid duplication, regional coordination meetings could serve as a forum for exploring further collaboration in the preparation of regional Goals reports and for systematic information-sharing and policy coherence, ensuring consistency and synergy.

7. Among other major initiatives, ESCAP had issued the first regional report on the Millennium Development Goals in June 2003; its second report was due in 2005, and would be a collaboration among ESCAP, the UNDP Asia-Pacific Bureau and the Asian Development Bank (AsDB). The other regional commissions were expected to issue their reports in 2005 as well. Those reports could stimulate action on debt relief, official development assistance and foreign

direct investment, which were crucial for the realization of the Goals.

8. One of the characteristics of regional reports was that they were highly interlinked and cross-sectoral in nature, and their implementation had a cross-border dimension. The poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) at the country level also needed a regional perspective, which might hinge on comparability of data, congruence of analysis and coherence of policy recommendations. The regional commissions were the best forum to explore those elements. Policy recommendations could vary by region, depending on the context and level of development, and the regional commissions had the capacity to provide appropriate policy options. They had worked intensively on the reports on the Goals in close cooperation with the United Nations system through regional coordination mechanisms. Their major contributions were an aggregate view and collective policy prescription which might converge into a global agenda, whereas country reports might not be able to realize that process in a consistent and effective manner.

9. **Mr. Fedorchenko** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation viewed the regional commissions as important organs to transform and adapt global development policy. It supported their cooperation with other regional organizations outside the United Nations system, for example the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The cooperation of ECE with some 20 European countries with economies in transition in their economic reform and integration efforts should continue, as should ESCAP cooperation with the countries of Central Asia.

10. During the 1990s, ECE had gained rich experience in reacting to new challenges and changing priorities, and with the recent expansion of Europe, it should re-evaluate its role. There should be no more demarcation lines in Europe, as all-European economic cooperation had become a real alternative. The active participation of ECE in consolidating the area would serve the interests of all countries of the region.

11. **Mr. Schultz** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the Stabilization and Association Process countries Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the Republic of Moldova, said that the regional commissions had played an important role in raising awareness of the Millennium Development Goals and underlining the need for consistent policies at the country, regional and international levels. While country-level ownership of the Goals remained key to their successful achievement, the regional level offered a valuable opportunity to exchange national experience and provided a useful framework for peer reviews. Regional monitoring complemented national monitoring of the Goals and highlighted regional trends and comparative approaches.

12. The European Union believed that the regional commissions had expertise that could be used more effectively to help countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and therefore welcomed the proposed reforms. A sharper focus for the activities of the regional commissions was needed. With regard to the work of ECE, he underlined the importance of avoiding duplication of work between the international and regional organizations taking an active role in the region. Some countries with post-transition economies had recently emerged as donors of official development assistance, a welcome advance. As for ECLAC, given the inequality of income distribution across that region, the European Union welcomed the current focus on developing distributive policies, including through the provision of stronger social support, as part of achieving Goal 8. Although the Asia and Pacific region had achieved the highest rate of growth in the world, key development challenges remained to be addressed: the region had the largest number of absolute poor, and several countries had increasing poverty levels. A recent regional meeting had provided a valuable assessment of the progress made and obstacles encountered towards the Goals in Asia and the Pacific. The European Union welcomed progress in the ESCWA region towards a number of the goals, notably in the areas of health and education. However, more must be done to address issues of poverty, education, governance, economic development and women's empowerment.

13. Resolving conflict was also vital if the region was to achieve its full potential. It was clear that the African continent remained furthest from achieving the Goals. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had made a major contribution to poverty eradication by helping countries conduct peer reviews of their poverty reduction strategies. The next generation of strategies must address structural constraints on poverty reduction through strategies for growth and

linkage of targets to the Goals. The European Union supported the Africa Gender Index, piloted in some 12 countries, and the Commission for HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa. It was worth noting that the recent ECA session had considered the first Mutual Review Report prepared jointly by ECA and OECD.

14. **Mr. Ibrahima** (Guinea) said that ECA provided welcome assistance to the countries of the Mano River Union, which were among the most vulnerable to crisis. He asked for more information about the link between studies and their implementation and whether partnerships were involved in carrying out the relevant plans.

15. **Mr. Adel** (Observer for the Arab Republic of Egypt) said that his delegation was concerned that several countries in the Western Asia region were not on the path to implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. He therefore reaffirmed the need to strengthen cooperation within the United Nations system and with regional organizations.

16. **Mr. Kim Hak-Su** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) said that the Asia-Pacific region had produced two reports on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals thus far. The 2003 report had indicated that it would be possible to achieve reductions in income poverty, but large gaps would remain in the gender and health areas. The second report in 2005 had indicated that it would be possible to reach the numerical goals, but that enormous disparities would remain. The region was divided into "fast-track" countries, which believed they would achieve the Goals by 2015, and "off-track" countries, mainly least-developed countries and small island developing States that did not expect to achieve any of the Goals by that date. As small States, their voices had not been heard. He recommended such new initiatives as South-South cooperation and foreign direct investment from China, India, the Republic of Korea and Hong Kong to help neighbours in the region.

17. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) said that Africa was the region where meeting the Millennium Development Goals presented the greatest challenge, as ministers had recognized at the ECA session held recently in Abuja on "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa". In the context of African development, the Goals by themselves did not represent the broader development agenda. There was a need to focus on economic growth and job creation and to address Africa's potential in a holistic manner. Despite the valuable contribution that they had made, poverty reduction strategies needed to be more comprehensive, growth oriented and more inclusive of the partnership agenda.

18. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was undermining many development goals. The Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa was therefore set to produce a report in the coming months about the impact of the pandemic on all aspects of society, taking a systematic look at best practices, the progress made and the challenges ahead with respect to prevention, care and treatment and financing.

19. The African Union was emerging as an important institution for meeting regional development challenges and ECA was working closely with it to meet the Goals.

20. **Mr. Machinea** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that there had been insufficient progress in the region towards achieving the Goals: the poorest countries had made the least progress and in many the per capita income was less than US$ 1,000 per annum. The international community would need to make a special effort for the region's countries to make more rapid progress.

21. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)) said that the ECE region comprised the most advanced countries as well as low-income and middle-income countries. The Goals were extremely relevant for low-income countries and needed to be better integrated into their national poverty reduction strategies. Many middle-income countries in the region had decided to upgrade their targets and goals to their own level of development. ECE would shortly prepare a report complementary to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, focusing on the achievement of regional policies and internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

22. **Ms. Nieto** (Ecuador) said that ECLAC had provided a complete report demonstrating the diversity of the region. While the region had many medium-income countries likely to meet the Goals, others

unlikely to do so should not be overlooked. She welcomed the report for clearly mentioning the impact of such factors as demographic growth, natural disasters and customs barriers on the ability of countries to meet the Goals.

23. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)), introducing the theme of cooperation between the regional commissions and organizations in support of the Millennium Development Goals, said that General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions gave the regional commissions a mandate to follow up on international conferences and summits in the area of development. That mandate provided a framework for strengthening cooperation so that internationally agreed development goals could be achieved with non-United Nations organizations at the regional level, including with regional development banks.

24. Evidence of collaboration in the ECA region was provided by ECA's growing collaboration with AU, six subregional economic groupings and the African Development Bank (ADB). In the ECE region, there was remarkable cooperation between ECE and OSCE and close cooperation between the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) and the European Commission. ECLAC was cooperating closely with the Organization of American States (OAS) and had longstanding cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In the ESCAP region, there was extensive cooperation between ESCAP and the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), and also with subregional groupings or organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). ESCAP organized annual consultative meetings between its Executive Secretary and the heads of subregional organizations. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) had close working contacts with the League of Arab States, the Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers and the Islamic Development Bank.

25. The executive secretaries were willing to provide the Council with details of their experience of working with non-United Nations bodies for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Economic, social and environmental threats to security had been recognized in the ECE region and were reflected in long-standing cooperation between ECE and OSCE. Such cooperation had recently been strengthened by the memorandum of understanding between the two institutions, which could be a valuable example for other regions to follow and might be used during the ongoing discussions concerning reform of the Council.

26. **Mr. Machinea** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus offered a comprehensive framework for a global partnership for development based on common but differentiated responsibilities and mutual accountability that required significant levels of policy coherence at the national, regional and global levels. While the major responsibility for achieving the Goals rested with individual countries, it was already clear that national efforts could not and would not succeed without a supportive and enabling international environment. The regional dimension offered countries an effective vehicle for cooperation when facing common development challenges and for the achievement of the Goals. Cross-border issues were of particular relevance.

27. To boost regional cooperation required the strengthening and deepening of subregional agreements through trade liberalization, greater mobility of labour and the adoption of common rules, regulations and macroeconomic coordination mechanisms. Through the consolidation of trade integration and macroeconomic and financial cooperation, regions could shield themselves from volatilities in the global and financial environment. Regional markets could also provide an excellent training ground for firms to learn to deal with external markets and an opportunity to harmonize a wide range of rules and regulations, reducing transaction costs and generating economies of scale.

28. Regional cooperation could also be improved through the development of a regional infrastructure network. Regional investments in physical infrastructure helped to reduce costs, unlock growth potentials and overcome geographical handicaps in low-income countries. Special emphasis needed to be placed on improving the productive infrastructure in transport and energy, developing information and communication technology infrastructures and networks at a regional level and harmonizing

regulatory schemes, as a way to reduce costs and improve access.

29. Mechanisms should also be expanded to support countries in times of crisis, particularly by deepening regional financial mechanisms. Regional and subregional development banks and funds could play a critical role in channelling funds to low-income countries, mitigating the impact of volatility in the financial markets of middle-income countries and providing access to long-term borrowing during crises. Those institutions could also serve as facilitators and catalysts for private-sector investment.

30. Common production and innovation strategies needed to be developed in areas such as cultural industries, agricultural research and tourism. The generation of regional and subregional innovations systems, especially where national resources were insufficient to compete at the international level, should facilitate the creation of broader schemes for cooperation in education, research and technical development.

31. It was important to raise awareness of regional richness in natural resources and biodiversity and create social cohesion by highlighting the need for more harmonious development within subregions. Regional mechanisms should be established to prevent, monitor and deal with natural disasters, and common policies should be devised to prevent and combat epidemics and pandemics, which would help to reduce mortality rates and enhance human capital.

32. Greater ownership by countries over regional and subregional institutions facilitated the provision of regional public goods through networks of regional institutions and diverse stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The regional commissions had been playing an active role in supporting and fostering those activities.

33. The regional monitoring of the Goals complemented national monitoring efforts by identifying regional trends and offering comparative approaches, thereby contributing to a common understanding of the problems faced. The regional sphere offered an opportunity to exchange national experience and improve best practices at the country level. In that respect, the regional commissions served as a means of exchanging experience among all member countries, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and the private sector.

34. The interdependence of economies in a globalized world had created a situation in which national policies, particularly those related to trade, investment, industrial development, and the environment, were often limited by international market considerations. Regional approaches could act as a bridge between the world economy and the individual concerns of countries. A regional approach was also almost always the only approach that developing countries could take if they wanted a voice in the international arena.

35. Strengthening policy coherence at the national, regional and international levels should remain a critical component for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The regional commissions had played an important role in raising awareness about the Goals and the need for different sets of consistent policies that should be developed at the country, regional and international levels.

36. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa) said that the Goals represented the shared global vision of development, a framework for a holistic response to the multifaceted challenges of development and a set of shared outcomes around which development partnerships could be forged and mutual commitments towards achieving them systematically monitored. While the Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom" proposed specific action to take, success would ultimately depend on effective global partnerships between rich and poor countries and all stakeholders.

37. In Africa, partnerships to meet the Goals should be assessed at the national and regional levels and in the context of partnerships between Africa and its development partners. At the national level, strong partnerships were needed between Governments, the private sector and civil society around the implementation of a robust employment strategy. At the regional level, collaboration and coherence were needed among the institutions responsible for various aspects of development. In Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) could provide the framework required. Such coherence was also needed in the other regions. The partnership between Africa and its development partners was a compact whereby African leaders had promised their peoples fundamental principles, such as good governance and poverty reduction. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) provided a good framework to

evaluate those commitments in a more robust manner and was a good mechanism for progress on the partnership for development agenda.

38. Another part of the compact entailed the international community increasing the volume and quality of aid, particularly in such priority areas as investment, education, infrastructure, capacity-building and conflict prevention. ECA had recently agreed on a major programme in those areas, stressing the key importance of fair trade. Recent encouraging signs from the international community included the European Union's commitments to double its aid and to move towards an official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The recent progress on debt cancellation was also particularly welcome. However, the ECA report had stressed that the Goals and poverty reduction should become the core principles for debt reduction or cancellation. In that respect, further progress could still be made on the African debt agenda.

39. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe), speaking on behalf of Ms. Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, stressed the importance of cooperation among the five regional commissions in support of the Goals. Meetings of their executive secretaries mandated by the Council were an effective mechanism for strengthening interregional cooperation. Referring in that connection to the Council's resolution 1998/46, she said that measures taken included the designation of mutually beneficial focal points in all substantive areas in the respective secretariats of the commissions. The focus was on coordinated follow-up to global summits, illustrated for example by the development of coordinated action for Central Asia by ECE and ESCAP, the coordination of analytical and operational activities and fund-raising with the help of other United Nations agencies. There were also stronger links between producers of gender statistics and cooperation in regard to regional instruments developed by each of the commissions, notably between ESCAP and ESCWA in the transport field. Other areas of cooperation included statistics on poverty, environment, health and disability. Since 2003 the commissions had benefited from greater coordination of both core and extrabudgetary resources and from the adoption of a strategic approach to development needs.

40. In the 2004-2005 biennium 23 regional and subregional projects had been approved on capacity-building for attainment of the Goals and for the next biennium 24 projects were in the pipeline. Thanks to the coordinated efforts of the regional commissions and the synergies being established between them, United Nations technical cooperation had become more responsive to countries' needs on the ground.

41. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) welcomed the new format of the regional cooperation segment, back-to-back with the high-level segment. He said that the cooperation among the regional commissions was a major contribution to the attainment of the Goals and that linkages between United Nations processes were of great importance, particularly in the context of Council reform. The Council was indeed a network and the challenge lay in using it in the best possible way. He invited suggestions in that regard, emphasizing the usefulness of peer review mechanisms in the regional commissions and links between regional and governmental cooperation forums.

42. Referring to the Secretary-General's report "In larger freedom", he welcomed the Peacebuilding Commission initiative and spoke of the triennial comprehensive policy review in the Council, particularly with a view to enhancing cooperation between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional commissions.

43. **Mr. Parwito** (Indonesia) said he agreed that the regional process was instrumental in supporting countries' efforts to attain the Goals. He said that while the Asia and Pacific region contained a number of good performers in that respect, the many developing countries in the region were facing a great challenge, not least in lowering child mortality rates. Development was by nature a long-term process, and had to be taken into account through corrective measures at the ministerial meeting to be held in Jakarta in August 2005, with a view to action beyond the immediate time frame.

44. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) said that she was very impressed by the document prepared by ESCAP. She noted that the least developed countries in Africa needed special help in attaining the Goals. How could their views be integrated into the 2006 mid-term review?

45. **Mr. Kim Hak-Su** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), focusing on what should be done to advance the process and plan of action already initiated, said that a special body had been set up on the least developed countries which had discussed the seven goals of the Brussels Programme of Action with Mr. Chowdury.

46. ESCAP had organized an open forum for the least developed countries one week previously in order to mobilize them, particularly in view of concern about some of its landlocked member countries. One success story about which those countries were very excited was the Asian Highway Intergovernmental Agreement which, following its ratification by eight member countries, had become effective on 4 July 2005. A number of other important issues were being addressed, including the rising of the sea level, climate change and coastal management.

47. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe), referring to the introductory statement by the delegation of the Russian Federation, said that the ECE had an important part to play in preventing new lines of division in the region. In addition to the old line between members and non-members of the European Union, new divisions had arisen, based on per capita GDP. The emerging market economies were growing much faster than the European Union average, while the least advantaged members were developing at an increasingly slow pace. Information and communication technologies and the digital divide constituted other dividing lines, and the World Summit on the Information Society had provided a good framework for exploring ways of bridging it in the ECE region.

48. The Commission was also important for economies in transition, but there were different issues to be addressed in the case of resource-rich and resource-poor countries, particularly in regard to the latters' dependence on access to gas, oil and other resources and the need to diversify their economies. In addition, both groups of countries had to fight the deterioration of their social and health sectors, in view of the sharp rise in the incidence of HIV.

49. It was essential for there to be closer cooperation between countries, not only global South-South cooperation but also among economies in transition in the ECE region, including South-Eastern Europe. Macroeconomic policies needed to be put in place to foster growth, stability and job creation, as recognized by the Bretton Woods institutions, which were providing assistance.

50. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa), responding to the question raised by the delegate of Benin, emphasized the sheer number of least developed countries in Africa, which were in the majority there and included all the sub-Saharan countries. The Commission's work was therefore by definition focused on those countries and was particularly concerned with issues of transport, trade and gender. It was also cooperating closely with Mr. Chowdury's office and would be holding a meeting in Addis Ababa in December 2005 to review progress and the thematic studies undertaken.

51. **Mr. Machinea** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) said that middle-income countries also suffered from problems of poverty and were marked by inequalities between ethnic groups. They were calling for a level playing field internationally. While there had been clear benefits from the Doha round of talks, not enough progress had been made, owing to the continuing heavy subsidies in the agricultural sector.

52. **Mr. Abdel Hamid** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) referred to the constant instability in the ESCWA region, which affected both the efforts of countries to attain the Goals and the work of the Commission itself. In its forthcoming programme and budget, a proposal had therefore been made to set up a small unit on emerging issues which would monitor developments in countries suffering from instability and help to overcome it.

53. He expressed the view that all the countries in the region, save perhaps one, would achieve the Goals, with the possible exception of poverty reduction, hindered in that regard by the situation of instability.

54. **Mr. Adel** (Observer for the Arab Republic of Egypt) addressed a first question to ECA, wondering how, since many countries were commodity-dependent, what ECA could do to make them less so and how it might seek to make prices more stable.

55. He put his second question to ESCWA, with reference to paragraph 62 of its report, asking what it could do, together with United Nations funds and

programmes, to attract investments to the country, which were at a low level because of the unstable situation.

56. **Mrs. Houngbedji** (Benin) noted that ECA's global approach to African development issues failed to recognize and address problems of particular relevance to the least developed countries as a distinct group. That might explain why the region's economic performance had not been so good. With all the focus that its development partners were bringing to bear on Africa, the stages of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals had yet to be clarified, and she sought to know how ECA was specifically addressing the problems specific to African least developed countries.

57. **Mr. Mirafzal** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) asked the executive directors of United Nations funds and programmes to describe the substantive challenges they faced in working with country support teams.

58. **Mr. Boonpracong** (Thailand) expressed appreciation for the work done by ESCAP in securing the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, which would promote policy coherence for enhanced trade and development in the region. ESCAP was also to be commended for agreeing to conduct a feasibility study on the proposed Asian investment bank, which would cushion the region from the effects of external volatility and prevent a recurrence of the Asian financial crisis. He asked what ESCAP would be doing about the fact that the level of traffic in the region was low in comparison to that of the ECE region.

59. **Mr. Abdel Hamid** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) agreed with the representative of the Observer for the Arab Republic of Egypt that investment and employment in Western Asia had been adversely affected by instability in the region. Statistics showed that the region would need as much as $35 billion in investments to reduce the level of unemployment. Also, the region lagged by as much as four percent behind other regions in foreign direct investment because of political instability and other shortcomings. In spite of that, ESCWA, in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, had organized a forum with the Palestinian Authority, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to discuss development support in the occupied territories, and agreement had been secured on a number of development projects totalling $32 million.

60. **Mr. Kim Hak-Su** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific) said that the sixty-fourth session of ESCAP had focused on those parts of the Monterrey Consensus having to do with Asia's investment requirements in terms of the highway network which the World Bank and International Finance Corporation (IFC) had estimated at $200 billion per year. To date, only $50 billion was available, as a loan portfolio and plans were being made to recycle $2.5 trillion of debt on the Asian bond market and to improve credit ratings on world markets. The 2006 session of ESCAP would be focusing on the theme of regional cooperation in Asian-Pacific infrastructural development. It was with that in mind that ESCAP had accepted to commission the pre-feasibility studies on the proposed creation of an Asian investment bank.

61. **Ms. Schmognerova** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe), responding to the issue raised by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said that while ECE had instituted technical cooperation arrangements among ECE States through legal instruments, there was still scope to develop cooperation with UNDP in such areas as land administration. She would explore opportunities to achieve the synergies discussed at the meeting with the new Administrator of UNDP. She also agreed with the call for an external review of the 60 years of infrastructural development in the European region and shared the concern over the emergence of new divisions. As the representative of the Russian Federation had stated, the ECE mandate should be expanded to promote cooperation between the European Union and its candidate countries, on the one hand, and the non-European, non-candidate countries having lower per capita GDP, on the other. The promotion of such pan-European cooperation would require further harmonization of legislation and ECE's expertise in transport and trade facilitation could be put to further use in creating a future trade area.

62. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa) said the fact that Africa was not homogenous had been precisely why, in its most recent comprehensive study on governance in Africa, the Commission had focused on 28 individual member States and was planning to increase that number to 40

by 2006. About 1,500 participants from all African countries and like-minded institutions had contributed to the exercise, which had culminated in the fourth African Development Forum (ADF IV) on the theme of governance. In its work on gender, another cross-cutting issue, ECA had developed indicators which individual member States currently used to measure progress in achieving the targets of the Beijing Platform for Action. Long before that, ADF 1 had focused on the national communications and information infrastructures (NICIs) and e-strategies of as many as 38 member States including Benin. The work of the Commission with subregional groupings such as the Economic Community of Central African States(ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) were equally country-specific. Admittedly, the results had not been categorized by subsets of countries, but the analysis would bear country-specific scrutiny and future outlooks would show where the 34 least developed countries of Africa stood against the backdrop of the general trends. Regarding commodity dependence, African countries would do well to keep diversification on the global trade agenda and fine-tune their trade and industrial policies within the context of regional integration.

63. To maintain the dialogue with development partners as instituted in the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations, ECA had set up in Geneva, with Canadian Government support, the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), which assisted African countries with negotiating tariffs, the bane of Africa's trade relations with the developed world. Unprocessed commodities attracted low tariffs while processed (and value-added) commodities attracted high tariffs, hindering the development of many African countries. To promote inter-State policy harmonization and coherence, ECA had developed, for African countries, a trade-competitiveness index which enabled them to identify such impeding factors as transport costs, whence the imperative need for regional integration. Trade liberalization would have to be sequenced with industrial policy and the need to add value to African commodities. Together with the World Bank and UNCTAD, ECA was exploring an enhanced role for the private sector. With regard to commodity price stabilization, the Commission had proposed the creation of a commodity fund within the African Development Bank (ADB). At a meeting convened in Washington, D.C. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had explored with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) how a degree of automaticity might be built into the commodity funding mechanism. He hoped that ADB would pursue that dialogue.

64. **Mr. Machinea** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), reacting to the comment made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said that in the Caribbean region ECLAC had been assessing natural disasters and learning from ESCAP's experience with tsunamis. The Commission had also conducted special surveys on population and housing, working with other funds and programmes. It was providing small and medium-scale enterprise training information to Brazil and advising Chile, Ecuador and Peru on their negotiation of free trade arrangements with the United States. At the request of UNDP, it was providing technical assistance to Haiti.

65. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that while he agreed with the representative of ESCWA that political instability was having an adverse impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the region, the problem had been exacerbated by the situation in the areas still under occupation by foreign powers.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.